

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
The Anointing of the Sick

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

Sickness and suffering are some of the worst problems confronting us, for in them we experience weakness, human limitations, and we are given a glimpse of death.

- ◆ Jesus' many healing miracles signified the closeness of the Kingdom of God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1503).
- ◆ The sick sought out Jesus, seeking the healing of mind, body, heart, and soul. Jesus continues to offer this healing in the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (see CCC 1504).

Serious sickness can lead some to despair and reject God in anger; or it can contribute to greater maturity and be the occasion for a person to search for and return to the Lord.

- ◆ We are invited by Jesus to take up our own cross and follow him, thus seeing illness in a new light (see CCC 1506).
- ◆ Sometimes we must learn along with Saint Paul the profound paradox that in weakness we are made strong by the grace of Christ (see CCC 1508).

Why Is This Important?

The human condition includes the universal experience of pain, suffering, debilitation, and death. God has not abandoned us to these awful realities but accompanies us during them through his Son, Jesus. Even though these same realities are not done away with, they are nevertheless overturned through Christ's own suffering, Death, and Resurrection.

We read in the New Testament that the apostles did this sort of thing, and the custom is retained in the church, that the priests will anoint a person who is ill and pray for his healing.

SAINT BEDE

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs, and provide a focal point with a candle, a Bible, the Oil of the Sick, and the ritual book *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, if possible. Provide name tags and have some refreshment available.

Welcome

Greet the participants as they arrive, and take time for introductions as the session begins. Then proclaim the Scripture from James 5:14–15 found at the top of the participant page.

Engage

1. Ask the group to share an experience of being with someone who was ill and asked for prayers or an experience of being with someone who was anointed.
2. Invite the group to read and reflect on the story in Insight. Then have them explore the For Reflection questions together.

Teach

Summarize or invite the group to read Church Teaching. Then discuss the following:

- ◆ The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick provides the sick, their families, and their friends a way to be with those who are ill in their time of suffering.
- ◆ This Sacrament helps us embrace our human condition and to see the human condition through the lens of Jesus' own suffering and Death.
- ◆ Visiting the sick is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy.

Apply

Brainstorm with the participants ways they can reach out to the sick in the parish, local community or in their own family. Encourage them to choose one the suggestions for themselves and to act on it.

Pray

Invite the participants to name aloud people who are sick. Conclude with a simple prayer such as: *Lord, you healed the sick that you encountered. We ask you to bless, in a special way, all those we have named aloud. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*